

## A contest to face, and fix, their fears

By Megan Kehoe / *The Bulletin*

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Andy Tullis / *The Bulletin*

Juniper Elementary School fifth-grader Bella Fassett talks about her Inveterprise contest invention from last year, The In and Out Scanner, to a group of her classmates while they think of ideas for possible new inventions for this year's contest.

Bend Research is asking students to face their worst fears this season.

Global warming. Erupting nuclear power plants. Meteors crashing to earth. Food shortages. Snakes.

Students will not only consider some of these possibilities. They also will work to solve them.

The 20th annual Inveterprise contest held by the pharmaceutical company Bend Research has officially started. From now until mid-November, Central Oregon students are encouraged to create science inventions that address their greatest fears.

"We're asking them the question, what scares you to death, and how do you fix it?" Ed LaChapelle, a scientist with Bend Research, said. "The idea is to somehow fix it with innovation."

The contest is sponsored each year by Bend Research, Bend-La Pine Schools and Central Oregon Community College. Entries are due by Nov. 11, and students can compete for a variety of prizes.

High school students have the chance of winning \$1,000 for first place and \$500 for second place. Middle-schoolers will compete for a first prize of their choice, choosing among a digital camera, e-reader, iPod, mountain bike or season pass to Mt. Bachelor. Winners at the elementary school level will receive specially designed T-shirts, and will be invited to a science night presentation by Bend Research.

Teachers in grades K-5 can also benefit — those that have at least 50 percent class participation will be eligible for the Tina McGeary Teacher Incentive Program. The program divides \$2,000 in gift certificates for classroom supplies and books among teachers who qualify.

The 25 judges are composed of Bend Research scientists, educators and volunteers.

"It has to be a highly creative and cool idea that solves a particular problem," said Bill Shotton, a fifth-grade teacher at Juniper Elementary.

### *Unique solutions*

Shotton has been involved with the program since the contest started 20 years ago, and has participated as a judge in previous years.

“A lot of times, you don’t know what would be a good idea until the project is finished,” Shotton said. “So it’s fun to see it all come together at the end.”

The theme is purposefully open-ended. The judges are looking for unique approaches to solving a variety of problems. Originality is an important aspect. They are also looking for well-developed ideas.

Students have the option of working individually or in groups on inventions. There aren’t a set number of awards, and the number of awards that are handed out depends on the quality of the entries. Last year, about 15 percent of the 640 students who entered won a prize.

Finished inventions will be accepted at the Bend Research manufacturing facility, located at 63060 Corporate Place in Bend, from Nov. 9 at 8 a.m. through Nov. 11 at 5 p.m. Students can submit the inventions in whatever form that conveys their idea best, such as models, essays, movies, computer programs and posters.

Winners will be announced by Dec. 1.

“The idea is to get kids fired up about science,” LaChapelle said. “We’re trying to encourage them to think of real solutions to problems.”

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